

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 535

By Naifeh

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mrs. Jimmie Wall Farris of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Mrs. Jimmie Wall Farris; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Farris was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, she served with acumen and alacrity for more than sixty years as an influential person in state, local, and national Democratic Party politics; and

WHEREAS, born in New Albany, Mississippi, Mrs. Farris was raised in Jackson, Tennessee, where she attended Northside High School; in high school, she graduated as Salutatorian, was selected as Poet Laureate, and was elected May Queen of her senior class; and

WHEREAS, Jimmie Farris attended Cumberland School of Law, where she met her husband, the late William W. "Bill" Farris, Sr.; after their marriage, she went on to earn her Bachelor of Professional Studies Degree from the University of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Farris served for twenty-five years as an employee of the United States Department of Defense, in which position she earned the respect of her peers and superiors alike for the exemplary quality of her work; and

WHEREAS, a prominent woman who worked to grant others their fundamental civil rights, Jimmie Farris testified on behalf of African-Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s because she believed they had been discriminated against by the federal government and had been passed over for promotions of which they were deserving; and

WHEREAS, a longtime political activist, Jimmie Farris gave of her time and many talents to serve on the Shelby County and Tennessee Democratic Executive Committees for decades; until recently, she was also a member of the Democratic National Committee; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, Mrs. Farris was a Delegate to the Democratic National Convention and she was a Super Delegate at the 2004 and 2008 Conventions; deeply committed to her political beliefs, she was a member of the Democratic Women of Shelby County for many years; and

WHEREAS, Jimmie Farris played a key role in the organization and development of Democratic clubs in Germantown, Cordova, Midtown, Bartlett, Collierville, Frayser, and East Memphis, that flourished during the 1990s and early 2000s; these Democratic clubs provided a reliable support base for local, state, and national Democratic political candidates as they sought votes in Shelby County; and

WHEREAS, as a result of Mrs. Farris's early vision and effort, several of the Democratic clubs continue to thrive; and

WHEREAS, though she was instrumental in so many Democratic clubs in Tennessee, Jimmie Farris's true political passion was preparing for Election Day, and she developed a strong reputation for her Election Day organization of ward and precinct poll workers for Democratic "Get-Out-the-Vote" activities; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Farris's husband was the former Chair of the Democratic Party of the State of Tennessee; together, the couple worked tirelessly on behalf of education, civil and women's rights, and the principles of the Democratic Party; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her many political contributions, Mrs. Farris was an active proponent of the arts and was appointed to the Tennessee Arts Commission by former Governor Lamar Alexander; she was reappointed by Ned Ray McWherter when he became Governor; and

WHEREAS, a highly regarded leader in the realm of arts, Jimmie Farris served as President of the Tennessee Ballet; with the help of her daughter, Laura, she pioneered a program in schools to teach dance and movement to the blind, strengthening their spatial awareness; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, while she was serving as President of the Tennessee Ballet, she secured the funds necessary to bring Mikhail Baryshnikov to Memphis to perform for a benefit program for the ballet, and Mrs. Farris went to the extra expense of entertaining the star at her own home in Sweetbriar; and

WHEREAS, mixing her gift of hospitality and her political ties, Jimmie Farris authored a cookbook titled, *What's Cooking in Politics*, filled with recipes from political leaders from across the country; profits from the cookbook went to benefit the Tennessee Ballet, and a second edition was later printed and sold to benefit Friends for Life, the local HIV service organization; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Farris was an active and devout member of Eudora Baptist Church for fifty-six years, and she was known for rarely missing Sunday school or a worship service; the congregation of Eudora Baptist was deeply loved by Jimmie Farris, who was a dear friend to many of them; and

WHEREAS, Jimmie Farris was also deeply devoted to her family, and she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order, caring with a selfless love and never failing to provide encouragement to her husband and children; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Farris enjoyed the loving companionship of her husband of fifty-seven years, Bill, and was the proud mother of five children, Bill Farris, Jr., Karen Nippert, Jim Farris, John Farris, and Laura Statham; and

WHEREAS, she will be sorely missed by her fourteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Jimmie Farris was preceded in death by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C.C. Wall, Sr.; her sisters, Mary Wall Brown and Dorothy Wall Morrison; a brother, C.C. Wall, Jr.; and a cousin, Myron C. "Sonny" Wall; and

WHEREAS, Jimmie Wall Farris leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Jimmie Wall Farris, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Jimmie Wall Farris.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.